Article Series Lung

Lung Cancer Cleveland Clinic Foundation video

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What is lung cancer?

So lung cancer, just like in any cancer, is when a cell divides out of control and that creates a growth that can be a tumor or a mass. And what makes that malignant is the fact that that tumor can invade other areas around the lungs or it can spread to different areas. For example, lung cancer can spread to the brain, it can spread to the liver, bones or the adrenal glands, for example.

What are the symptoms of lung cancer?

So it's important to know that lung cancer may not develop any symptoms until the disease is in a more advanced stage. But symptoms that may occur with lung cancer can include chest pain, feeling short of breath, having cough or having blood in the phlegm that comes with the cough. And later, as the disease progresses, someone can develop fatigue and weight loss, for example.

How can I prevent lung cancer?

So, the best way to prevent lung cancer is not to smoke if you've never smoked before, or if you do smoke, to quit smoking. There are other exposures, other risk factors other than smoking. And they can be exposures to certain carcinogens, for example asbestos or radon. It's something that it can be in people's houses. So it is important to measure that in your basement, for example, to see how high or how low the rate or level is in your house.

What should I know nowadays about teenagers and vaping?

In addition to lung cancer, other concerns are the short-term risks. For example, having acute inflammation in the lungs because of the use of vaping, someone damaging their teeth or their bone structure in their mouth because of vaping. And vaping can also cause addiction. Nicotine addiction is a problem itself. It can affect your memory, your mental health, and can cause a bunch of other problems associated with your mental health.

Can vaping cause lung cancer?

Vaping right now is a concern because it's still very common among, especially high school students. So it's not clear whether vaping would be associated with lung cancer development in two or three decades from now. But vaping can be associated with possible mechanisms that can lead to lung cancer. So right now, it's also important to avoid vaping or if you vape, to quit vaping as well.

How do I know if I'm eligible for lung cancer screening?

So right now, the criteria to be eligible for lung cancer screening is to be between 50 and 80 years of age. And for people who had history of smoking of at least 20 pack years. That means, for example, if someone smoked one pack per day for 20 years, one times 20 makes 20 pack years. And for people who quit, they quit within 15 years. And the goal of lung cancer screening is to find the disease at an early stage when someone is asymptomatic and disease is very early and the chance of achieving cure is much higher compared to when we find disease at an advanced stage.

25% of all cancer deaths are due to lung cancer. And with earlier screening, we know that we can give someone a much better opportunity of fighting that cancer and surviving that cancer. So if you have a history of smoking or if you currently smoke, talk to your provider about whether or not you're eligible for screening for lung cancer.

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